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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of effective mentor teachers by analyzing the strategies and skills they used, the obstacles and problems they encountered, and the outcomes they achieved. Data for five case studies were collected from five elementary mentor teachers, their proteges, and their principals--participants in the Oregon Beginning Teacher Support Program. Interviews and questionnaires were the sources of the data. Collaborative problem solving was the strategy most used by the mentors, followed by emotional support, energizing and motivating, and demonstration/modeling. Skills successfully used by the mentors included the social process skill of interpersonal ease, listening, knowledge of educational content, demonstration/modeling, and confidence-building. Team match and empathy for the protege were the chief sources of support for mentors, while increased professional growth ranked as the highest sources of satisfaction. The major impediment to the mentoring process was lack of time. Informants indicated that the major outcomes of the mentor program were a satisfactory relationship between mentor and protege and satisfaction with the program. (IAH)

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Skills, Strategies, and Outcomes of Successful Mentor Teachers

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SKILLS, STRATEGIES, AND OUTCOMES OF SUCCESSFUL MENTOR TEACHERS[1]

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INTRODUCTION

A total of 22 states are now using a mentoring model to assist beginning teachers (protégés) with their socialization into the profession (McKenna, 1990). This development has created a new role for experienced teachers who are placed in the role of mentor. There has been little research about the characteristics of these mentor teachers and the qualities they need in order to perform effectively. The present study was undertaken for this reason. We sought to understand the role of effective mentor teachers by analyzing the strategies and skills they used, the obstacles and problems they encountered, and the outcomes they achieved. Our hope was that the research would improve the education profession's understanding of how to select mentor teachers with high potential for being effective, and how to provide training that helps them realize this potential to the fullest.

The Oregon Beginning Teacher Support Program (hereafter Oregon Mentoring Program) provided a context for studying the work of mentor teachers. This program, which has been funded by the Oregon state legislature since 1987, is a voluntary, statewide effort to assist beginning teachers' transition into their classrooms, schools, and districts. Each participating school district has substantial freedom to design their project to accommodate local conditions. For example, although the district must guarantee a minimum of 90 contact hours per school year between mentor teachers and beginning teachers, the amount of classroom released time for this purpose is a matter for local decision. Also, each school district receives $3,000 per beginning teachers from the Oregon Department of Education, but how that money is to be allocated among the options

of salary, substitute teacher expenses, and fees for relevant conferences is a matter for local decision.

Mentor and protégé training consists of a series of three one-day workshops in August, October, and February. The workshops focus on such topics as mentor responsibilities, adult learning styles, mentoring strategies, and instructional skills. Also, the program administrators stress the need for regular release time so the mentor and protégé have the opportunity to work together collaboratively.

The following research questions guided the intensive case studies of five mentor teachers:

1. What is the situational and historical context in which mentor teachers assume their roles?
2. What strategies do mentor teachers need to use in order for them to successfully complete their tasks?
3. What skills do mentor teachers need to possess in order for them to successfully complete their tasks?
4. What sources of satisfaction and support do mentor teachers experience during the course of their mentoring?
5. What frustrations, obstacles, and impediments do mentor teachers encounter in their mentoring?
6. What outcomes did the mentor teachers achieve?

The conceptual framework and methodology used to answer the research questions was derived from the research of Miles, Saxl, and Lieberman (1988) on characteristics of change agents in education.

METHOD

Research Design

The case study method (Yin, 1989) was used to answer the research questions. The design of the study was descriptive in the sense that the research methods were intended to obtain as clear a picture as possible of certain aspects (strategies, skills, obstacles and problems, sources of support, outcomes) of the mentor teacher's work. Comparisons were made between the five case studies to determine whether mentor teachers' work forms general patterns.

Sample

The study was conducted in five elementary schools, one in each of five districts in the northern part of Oregon's Willamette Valley surrounding the Portland metropolitan area. All the research data were gathered during May and June of 1990. The districts range in size from 550 students to 4,000 students. School populations ranged from a high of 575 to a low of 180 students.

The sample schools were selected for study through a combination of recommendations from the Oregon Department of Education and local district project directors. These two sources were asked to identify model programs with exemplary mentor teachers at the elementary level.

We requested that the Oregon Department of Education's Mentor Teacher Program Coordinator list those district programs that, in his opinion, were well managed. We then invited the State Coordinator and project leaders from those "well managed" districts to suggest mentor teachers whom they considered to be exemplary in their effectiveness. Because the principal researcher was most familiar with elementary education, elementary-level mentor teachers were the only teachers we selected for possible study. From the lists that were given to us by the state mentor coordinator and district project leaders, we found the five districts and schools that agreed to participate in the study.

The five case studies included four female mentors, one male mentor, four female protégés, and one male protégé. The one male protégé was matched with a female mentor.

Measures

Semi-structured interview schedules and questionnaires were adapted from those developed by Miles and his colleagues (1988) to study school improvement coordinators, by Beaton (1985) to study staff development specialists, and by Strudler (1987) to study computer education specialists.

The interview schedules and questionnaires included questions about the mentors' background, strategies and skills used, outcomes achieved, obstacles and impediments encountered, and sources of support and satisfaction experienced. A classification system developed by Miles and his colleagues, and later modified by Beaton and Strudler, was used to guide the informants' responses or to code informants' open-ended responses. Strategies were classified into 16 categories, for example: solution-giving, resource-adding, and collaborative problem-solving. Skills were classified as general or specific. General skills were classified into 10 categories, for example: listening, interpersonal ease, and training and doing workshops. Specific skills were classified into 12 categories, for example: initiative-taking, confidence-building, and confrontation. Outcomes were classified into 12 categories, for example: positive student impact, school climate change, and satisfactory relationship with protégé. Obstacles were classified into 9 categories, for example: lack of time to do the job, lack of proximity to protégé, and insufficient training. Supportive elements were classified into 10 categories, for example: district support, clinical supervision support, and ability to empathize with protégé. Finally, sources of satisfaction were classified into 9 categories, for example: increased status, the opportunity to help someone, and job promotion/change. Informants also were given the opportunity to generate additional categories for each aspect of the mentor's role that was studied.

Each mentor teacher, his or her protégé, and the building principal completed both the interview and the questionnaire. The content of the interview and questionnaire varied slightly depending upon the role of the informant. The data from the various measures and informants were triangulated to develop as valid a description as possible of the mentors' strategies, skills, obstacles, sources of support, and outcomes. For most items, data were available from all 15 informants--the five mentors, the five protégés, and the five school principals. The exception was the items pertaining to mentors' sources of satisfaction. Only the mentors completed these items. Two raters were used to check reliability of coding the data into these categories from the questionnaire and interview data.

Data Analysis

The data from the 15 interviews were transcribed using a computer word processing program. After the data from the interviews were read and coded using the categories developed by Miles and his colleagues, an independent assistant read and coded the same data.

The data next were entered into a computer spreadsheet program that cross-referenced all the questions and variables. Using the computer spreadsheet program, information in the interview transcripts that was related to a particular question, hypothesis, and/or site could be isolated.

We combined the questionnaire and interview results for each case study to construct tables that provide a composite description of the five mentor teachers' work. Table 1 illustrates the procedure. The first data column is composed of the total number of times a particular strategy was directly mentioned or implied by all fifteen informants during their interviews. Frequency counts of the direct or implied uses of the strategies had an inter-rater reliability of 95% for the two people who rated the responses. The second data column presents the total number of times any of the fifteen informants checked a particular item on their questionnaires as present in the mentor's work.

The third data column is a summary of informants' responses when asked to rank a mentor's top three strategies, skills, obstacles, outcomes, and sources of support and satisfaction. A weighting system was used to accommodate the fact that different numbers of items were ranked for each mentor. A rank of 1 indicates that the item was most prevalent or important in the mentor's work. The higher the rank number, the less prevalent or important was the item.

The three columns of statistical results in each table provide a triangulation of how prevalent or important a particular item was in the mentor's work. A high degree of consistency was found for most items across the three response tasks (interview, questionnaire, and ranking procedure).

RESULTS

The results of the study were organized to answer each of the six research questions stated above.

What is the situational and historical context in which mentor teachers assume their roles?

Many schools do not need to hire beginning teachers each year. When a decision is made to hire new teachers, however, it usually is done without much advance notice. This was the case for the five protégés studied here. Thus, there was little opportunity to include input from a variety of sources in selecting the mentors for the protégés, even though experts (e.g., Little, 1990) recommend this procedure.

All five case studies demonstrated that the inclusion of a broad-based selection process was not a necessary pre-condition to the operation of a successful program. Four of the five principals made the final selection themselves without any formal selection policies or criteria to guide them. However, the principals at two of the four schools that did not have any selection policies indicated that they would like to have had some selection procedures

in place if their schools were to participate in the Oregon Mentoring Program again in the future.

Experts (e.g., Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Huling-Austin, 1988; Odell, 1990) recommend that mentor teachers should be chosen whenever possible from a pool of prospective mentors who teach the same grade level and in the same vicinity of the school as their protégés . However, these optimal circumstances were not present at four of the five schools in the study. The absence of grade level congruence and/or proximity between the mentor and protégé did not present insurmountable problems for any of the mentor-protégé teams at these four schools. They were able to devise alternatives that overcame the effects of these problems to some extent. Therefore, even though a school may not be able to find a grade level or proximal mentor-protégé match, the results of the present study suggest that this should not be a deciding factor in their decision to participate in a mentoring program.

What strategies do mentor teachers need to use in order for them to successfully complete their tasks?

Results pertaining to this research question are shown in table 1. They indicate that collaborative problem-solving was the strategy most used by the mentors. We identified four possible explanations for this result. First, collaborative problem-solving is probably a frequent need of first-year teachers because of inadequacies of preservice education. Preservice teachers learn general instructional principles but they have few opportunities to apply and fine-tune them in classroom settings. In fact, most preservice teachers only work in one setting, namely, their student teacher placement. Because it is unlikely that their first professional position will be the same as their student teacher placement, beginning protégés are likely to experience many problems in adapting to the demands of their new positions. It makes sense then, that when given the opportunity for assistance

from a mentor, protégés will ask their mentors for help in dealing with the problems posed by their specific classroom settings.

Another reason for the prevalence of the collaborative problem-solving strategy is that first-year teachers lack confidence in their own problem-solving capabilities. This is to be expected because these teachers are new both to teaching and their particular school.

A third reason for the prevalence of collaborative problem-solving is that it is a strategy usually initiated by the protégés. That is, the protégé describes a classroom problem and asks for the mentor's assistance in helping to solve it. Our observation was that mentors felt more comfortable responding to questions from their protégés than in initiating ideas or critiquing their protégés performance. This interpretation is supported by the low rating that informants gave to the strategy of solution-giving.

A fourth reason for the prevalence of the collaborative problem-solving strategy is that teaching is an ambiguous, complex enterprise that poses many problems for teachers. Without a mentor or other source of ready help for their classroom problems, protégés either would ignore these problems or try to solve them on their own through an uncertain trial-and-error process. However, with an experienced mentor personally available to them on a daily basis, it seems reasonable that protégés would rely on them as a resource to help them solve these problems.

Informants ranked emotional support as the second most used strategy by mentors. To understand the prevalence of this strategy, we refer to the fact that teaching is a difficult activity involving many variables. Therefore, lessons often do not proceed according to teachers' intentions. These setbacks and failures can be emotionally devastating and affect a teacher's self-confidence, especially when the teacher is working in his or her first classroom. If the protégé trusts the mentor, the protégé is more likely to express their emotional difficulties to the mentor; and sensitive mentors, as the case study mentors were, will respond with the emotional support their protégés need.

Another reason for the prevalence of emotional support is that teaching is very personal and makes great demands on teachers' emotions. Some students bring emotional problems from home to the classroom, and teachers themselves become emotionally involved with these problems. Also, many protégés are stressed by the wide gulf between the expectations they have for their classrooms and their actual classroom experience (Odell, 1989). The stress is compounded if the protégé must deal with the stress without the support of family and friends. This unfortunately is the case, because protégés' first teaching position often takes them away from these sources of support. It should come as no surprise, then, that protégés turn to their mentors for emotional support to help them deal with their stress.

Still another reason for the prevalence of the emotional support strategy is that protégés' interactions with other significant adults in their lives (school staff, spouses, friends, and family members) tend to be short and clipped because of the amount of time the protégés must devote to the preparation of their lessons. Consequently, the protégés do not receive the full emotional release they need from these conversations. Also, other people are not likely to understand the protégé's situation. Consequently they cannot listen sympathetically and provide the protégé with a full measure of emotional support. However, mentors are ideally suited for this role, because they share the same work situation as their protégés and probably have experienced many of the same emotional strains either currently or in the past when they first started teaching.

A noteworthy feature of table 1 is the number and variety of strategies that mentors used with their protégés. This result may mean that diverse strategies are needed to meet the idiosyncratic needs of each of the five protégés. Of the 16 strategies, only two received no ranking whatsoever - controlling and training. (These two strategies were not ranked because they did not receive a rating from any of the informants at the five schools in the study.) Strategies related to training such as technical assistance and clinical conferences also received a low rating from informants.

One explanation for the mentors' low use of the training strategy is that the protégés were concerned about applying their recently acquired instructional skills to their classrooms; they did not feel the need to learn new instructional skills. Another reason was the mentors' desire to establish a collegial equality with their protégés rather than a hierarchical teacher-student relationship, which the mentors may have felt was implied in the use of a training strategy. This explanation also applies to the low ranking for the strategy of controlling. Initiating a training sequence would place mentors in direct opposition to the individualistic and egalitarian traditions of teaching (Lortie, 1968; Flinders, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989; Little, 1990). Still another reason for mentors' low use of the training strategy is that it represents an initiatory rather than the responsive mode that was preferred by the mentors. Some of the mentors also may have lacked the self-confidence or the time to recognize a problem and initiate a remedial training sequence.

Informants ranked energizing and motivating the protégé as the third most important strategy that mentors used. This strategy is similar to emotional support, which also was ranked highly. One reason for the importance of energizing and motivating is the anxiety and insecurity of the protégés. Also, the protégés might be quite discouraged about lessons that did not proceed as planned because of the amount of time they had invested in their preparation and planning. When their protégés experienced a classroom failure and were in despair about it, mentors first had to emphasize those things their protégés had accomplished before they could begin to problem-solve ways to improve their teaching.

The informants' ranking of the demonstration/modeling strategy as the fourth most important strategy of mentors has a straightforward explanation. In a close association with another person over a year's time, it is reasonable to expect the protégés to adopt many of the behaviors and attitudes that were demonstrated by their mentors.

What skills do mentor teachers need to possess in order for them to successfully complete their tasks?

Results pertaining to this research question are shown in table 2.

General skills. The combined rankings from all informants in the study replicate closely the findings of Beaton (1985), Strudler (1987), and Miles and colleagues (1988). These researchers found that effective educational change agents of various types possess the social process skill of interpersonal ease. Similarly, the combined rankings from all informants (see table 2) in the present study indicated that interpersonal ease was the general skill mentors most frequently used.

Examples of interpersonal ease abound in the case studies. Whether it was by taking coffee breaks together, meeting for social events outside of school, or by having conversations at the protégé's request, all the mentors made themselves freely available to their protégés. Our personal observations of the mentors' behavior also indicated that they were consistently friendly, cheerful, and outgoing.

The protégés had all sorts of questions about their new assignments, especially at the beginning of the school year. In the relatively short time prior to the opening of school and under the pressure of organizing their classes, the protégés needed definite, immediate answers to many questions. Mentors who are open and with whom the protégés find it is easy to share their problems and concerns fill this need.

A skill that is closely related to interpersonal ease is listening. Informants rated it as the second most important general skill that mentors used. An explanation for its importance is that if a mentor is to develop a helping strategy that meets the needs of the protégé, he or she must to be able to diagnose the difficulties a protégé is having. This would be impossible if the mentor did not have the ability to listen to the protégé express his or her needs and concerns. The importance of listening to the protégés is demonstrated by the fact that all of them checked listening on their questionnaires. In her research

synthesis of teacher induction programs, Huling-Austin (1988) discovered that protégés thought that listening was the most helpful skill their mentors used with them.

The combined ratings from all informants yielded a third place ranking for each of the general skills of master teacher and knowledge of educational content. The two skills are interrelated because one of the main characteristics of a master teacher is a thorough knowledge of the subject matter content. What type of knowledge might this be? One principal suggested that a mentor teacher "had to have an understanding of the curriculum and its goals." All five mentors had served or were serving on one of their school's or district's curriculum committees.

All five principals stated that one of the most important factors in their selection of a mentor was the individual's standing as a master teacher. Most informants connected a master teacher with "technical proficiency" in the performance of their classroom instructional responsibilities.

Specific Skills. The highest ranked specific skill in the prioritized ratings used by mentors was demonstration/modeling. Informants at four of the five schools rated it first or second in importance. These were schools where it was possible for the protégés to observe their mentors. The likely explanation for the importance attributed to demonstrations and modeling is that it is easier to conceptualize a teaching principle or technique when one can see it in practice. Most protégés had many opportunities to discuss classroom techniques in their preservice training, but very little opportunity to see these techniques in practice.

The specific skill that received the second highest ranking was confidence-building. Thirteen of the fifteen informants gave it high priority. When asked to identify indicators of confidence-building, informants mentioned expressions of affirmation, encouragement, and support for the protégés in meeting a new situation or new demand. These assurances came through personal notes that the mentors left in protégés' mailboxes, personal awards, certificates of achievement given in recognition of protégés' accomplishments, and

mentors' verbal praise of a protégé during the course of their personal interactions in a regular school day.

Trust/rapport-building and resource-bringing tied for the third place rank for the specific skills. The importance of trust and rapport is understandable because they are essential pre-conditions to the establishment of a positive working relationship between a mentor and protégé. If the mentor and protégé do not develop a sense of safety, openness, and lack of threat between themselves, they will have a difficult time working together. Studies by Zey (1984), Beaton (1985), Miles and colleagues (1988), and Huling-Austin and colleagues (1989) also found that trust and rapport are necessary skills if mentors and other educational change agents expect to successfully implement their programs.

In their search to make sense of their new schools and classrooms, protégés need quick and knowledgeable responses to their queries. If the mentor does not know the answer to a protégé's question or cannot suggest a possible solution to a protégé's problem, the mentor should be able to suggest other resources that can help the protégé. This is the essence of the skill of resource-bringing. The resources that mentors brought to their protégés ranged from other teachers to curriculum specialists and from university classes to workshops that would be interesting and appropriate for protégés to attend.

Support was only ranked as the fourth most important skill that mentors used. However, it was the most mentioned skill in the interviews, and it was checked on the questionnaire by all 15 informants. This result is consistent with a finding obtained by Huling-Austin and her colleagues (1989) in their study of beginning teacher assistance programs. They found that beginning teachers identified the emotional support they received as the most beneficial aspect of all the assistance they encountered.

Researchers have demonstrated that when teachers encounter new situations or circumstances, they will function more ably if they are in a supportive and nurturing environment that allows them to make mistakes (Bird & Little, 1986; Acheson & Gall, 1991; Stroble & Cooper, 1988). The protégés in the present study are no different than

other teachers. They valued the freedom they had to make mistakes without damaging their credibility with their principals or other teaching peers.

The low ranking for collaboration (tied for sixth place) was surprising given the fact that collaborative problem-solving was the top ranked strategy. Four of the five protégés checked collaboration on their questionnaires, yet only one mentor and one principal checked the same item on their questionnaires. Because the protégés wanted to share and perfect their classroom skills, collaboration may have assumed an importance for them that was not true for the mentors. Perhaps the traditional individualistic, isolationist traditions of public education had become so ingrained in the minds of the principals and mentors that they did not recognize or understand the importance of collaboration when it was used.

What sources of support and satisfaction do mentor teachers experience during the course of their mentoring?

Results pertaining to this research question are shown in tables 3 and 4.

Informants rated the mentor-protégé team match as mentors' most important source of support, while empathy for the protégé was ranked second. An explanation for these rankings is that the success of any mentor program depends on how well mentor and protégé are matched to each other. If the match is poor, the mentoring experience will be a source of continual stress for the mentor or protégé. If the match is good, the mentoring experience will be positive and rewarding, that is, a source of support.

All the schools in the study relied on the principals to match the mentor and protégé. Given the high rating that informants gave to team match as a source of support, it appears that the principals had a good understanding of their faculty's personalities and professional strengths.

All the mentors and five of the ten principals and protégés checked empathy for the protégé on their questionnaires. This item was also mentioned more frequently during our interviews than any of the other sources of support. All the mentors could recall their own

problems as first-year teachers. These personal reflections probably provided the basis for their ability to empathize with their protégés.

Informants rated previous experience with adults as the third most important source of support for mentors. Every mentor in the study had extensive previous experience with adults, and each of them used this experience to help them mentor their protégés. In two cases, the mentors had formal training and experience working with adults in an educational setting. In three cases, the mentors' peers had asked them to serve on district curriculum or contract negotiations committees. Also, three of the five mentors served as active members or chairpersons on community or church committees.

Administrative support was the fourth most important source of support for mentors. This item refers to support from the local administrator, namely, the school principal. During our interviews, all five mentors and four of the five protégés went out of their way to express how important they felt the support of their principal had been to their success. However, there apparently was enough trust between the principals and their mentors that the principals did not become involved in the day-to-day management of their mentor-protégé teams. In fact, mentors and protégés at each of the schools specifically mentioned the freedom their principals allowed them.

Mentor training was ranked as the fifth most important supportive element for mentors. Yet only three of the five mentors felt that their training had helped them in the performance of their duties. Interestingly, each of the mentors who thought their mentor training had been helpful had already received training in team teaching or peer coaching. All the mentors expressed a desire to have training in adult learning principles, because they perceived that their protégés had quite different learning motivations and needs than did their primary clients, that is, the children whom they teach..

Mentor programs generally are thought to be for the benefit of the protégé. We found, however, that the mentors also benefit from their participation in such programs. Elementary teachers often complain about talking with kids all day long (Lieberman &

Miller, 1979), and mentoring gives these teachers the opportunity to work with other adults. They also are exposed to new ideas and educational innovations.

With only one exception, the highest ranked sources of satisfaction for the mentors were relationship-oriented (see table 4). One mentor spoke for all the mentors when she said: "I'm a people person." All five mentors ranked first or second the opportunity to develop a personal relationship. A majority of the mentors also gave high rankings to two other relationship-oriented satisfactions: the increased opportunity for personal growth and the opportunity to help someone.

The highest ranked source of satisfaction for the five mentors was increased professional growth. This finding is supported by the results that McKenna (1990) obtained in her study of Wisconsin mentor teachers. After years of isolation in their own classrooms, these mentors valued the opportunities they had to attend conferences and observe other teachers' classrooms. The mentors used these opportunities to reflect upon their own teaching, which was another value of the program for them.

While a majority of the mentors placed a high value upon their selection as mentors and enjoyed the increased salary they received for their extra duty, neither of these sources of satisfaction outranked any of the more personal relationship-oriented or professional growth satisfactions. One reason for the lower ranking of selection is that it places pressure on the mentor to deliver a creditable performance.

The mentors' omission of job promotion or change as a source of satisfaction is supported by the research of McLaughlin & Yee (1988). Career advancement in public education traditionally has meant a vertical promotion out of the classroom and into an administrative or supervisory function. Another view of career enhancement is more individually based. McLaughlin and Yee found that career enhancement is coming to be viewed as also involving an internal sense of accomplishment and job satisfaction. The mentors in the study were classroom teachers who wanted to remain as classroom teachers.

All the mentors reported that their experiences had enhanced their enjoyment of teaching. This renewal of their enthusiasm for teaching that was reported by the mentors in this study may have come at a critical period in their professional careers. Huberman (1989), in a sample of Swiss teachers, found that most teachers with 15 to 20 years of service were experiencing some form of self-doubt or reassessment of their careers. The mentoring experience may help these teachers overcome their self-doubts and even promote their retention in the teaching profession.

Mentors made little reference to increased status among their peers as a source of satisfaction. However, mentors at every school later reported to us that in the year following their mentorships, a greater number of teachers asked the mentors for assistance with classroom problems or other difficulties. Contrary to findings of previous research (Little, 1990), none of the mentors in the study found negative tones in their social interactions with their teaching colleagues after their selection. In fact, three of the five mentors reported increased professional interaction with their colleagues about issues or problems in their classrooms. At these three schools, the mentors felt their status among their teaching peers had actually increased as a result of their selection.

What frustrations, obstacles, and impediments do mentor teachers encounter in their mentoring?

Results pertaining to this research question are shown in table 5.

By an overwhelming margin, fourteen of the fifteen informants rated lack of time as mentors' greatest impediment. None of the mentors or protégés had any extra free time allotted to them for maintaining their mentoring responsibilities, even though research (Little, 1990) clearly indicates that a regularly scheduled contact time during the school day enables mentors to work productively with their protégés.

The dimension of the lack of time problem for mentors can be understood by referring to one of the mentor teachers, who was an acknowledged time management expert. Both

her principal and her protégé described this mentor as "organized." This mentor teacher told us that she takes a lot of pride in her time management skills. For example, she is usually the first one in the building to submit required reports to the principal or the district office. Consequently, when she told us that she was glad the mentor training had included a time management segment, we wanted to learn more. She told us that the only reason she was able keep up with both her classroom and mentor responsibilities was because she gave personal organization and time management a top priority.

A lack of proximity to their protégés' classroom was a problem for four of the five mentors. The exception was a school where the mentor's and protégé's classrooms were separated by a room divider only. All the other mentor-protégé teams' classrooms were located some distance from each other.

Only a few informants felt concerned about each of the other potential obstacles: lack of grade congruence between mentor and protégé, lack or resources, lack of knowledge about adult learning styles, insufficient training, and insufficient salary. The four mentor-protégé teams that had a grade congruence problem developed alternatives that utilized other teachers who taught at the same grade level as their protégés. Each district had allotted a budget that was sufficient to meet the needs of their mentor-protégé team. None of the mentors had expected any additional salary, so the extra stipends the program provided were a pleasant, well-received surprise.

What outcomes did the mentor teachers achieve?

Results pertaining to this research question are shown in table 6.

A majority of the informants (11 of the 15) overwhelmingly agreed that the two most significant outcomes of the mentor program at their schools were a satisfactory relationship between the mentor and the protégé and satisfaction with the program (see table 6). Both of these outcomes attest to the importance of the unique relationship between mentors and their protégés.

All the mentors and protégés agreed that they were extremely pleased with the program and with the personal relationships they had developed with each other. Most of the mentors and protégés characterized their relationships as "special."

The outcomes in table 6 are listed in a hierarchical manner from those judged most easy to attain to those judged least easy to attain. This classification system is based on Miles and Huberman's (1984) classification scheme. Satisfactory relationship between the mentor and the protégé and satisfaction with the program fall within the lower-half or easier to attain range of the hierarchically-organized table. That is not meant to diminish their importance. It does mean that in the context of the realm of possible school improvements, the mentor program with this set of outcomes is not likely to result in any permanent changes in the school's structure or programs. However, no claim was made that the Oregon Mentoring Program could accomplish these more permanent outcomes.

A slight minority of the informants (7 of the 15) thought that protégés were using specific skills and procedures as a result of their association with their mentors. On their questionnaires, a majority of protégés (4 of the 5) felt they were using specific procedures or skills they learned from their mentors. Yet only two of the five mentors checked that same item. Also, there was only one interview comment that could be attributed to this item. That comment specifically referred to school organizational policies, procedures, and deadlines.

Because the training strategy was rarely used, the number of times protégés used instructional skills and procedures they acquired from their mentors were few in number. For a majority of the mentors, observations of their protégés were kept to the minimum of two that were required by the program. The mentors at two of the five schools observed their protégés for more than the two minimum periods. And these two mentors (at Davis & Euclid) only made observations about issues of specific concern to their protégés. The data also support this view. Most mentors felt uncomfortable being placed in a judgmental role without any training in clinical supervisions or peer coaching. Even those mentors who had training in either of those areas felt uncomfortable in that role.

Slightly over half of the informants in this study (8 of the 15) indicated that the program had a positive impact on students. The informants reasoned that the protégés displayed a greater self-confidence in the classroom than those first year teachers without protégés. Consequently, the students in the protégés' classrooms probably were not bothered by the distraction of an anxious teacher who lacked self-confidence. Positive student impact is the only high ranking outcome that is clustered toward the more difficult to attain end of the outcomes hierarchy.

The positive impact on students outcome has another important dimension. One of the most important benefits of mentoring may be the meta-cognitive message to the protégé that he or she is an important and valued member of the school staff. This message is conveyed by the trust and support that all the protégés reported they received from their mentors. It may be that the protégés will transfer the supportive environment they experienced with their mentors to their relationships with the students in their classrooms. The protégés who receive this message may well be more likely to value their students and consider them important.

It is surprising that the informants did not rate implementation higher than they did because the program was successfully implemented at all five schools. The five schools had been recommended to me by the state and the district project directors precisely because the implementation of the program at those schools had been so successful. Apparently the informants are judging program implementation by a different standard. It may be that implementation becomes significant to people only when it is absent.

Mentor-Protégé Team Effects on School Climate

Both the mentors and protégés at three of the five schools reported that other staff members at the school were interested in their activities. At all three schools, interested teachers had formed informal discussion and support groups.

At one school, the support group's activities focused on two instructional strategies: cooperative learning and whole language learning. The teachers in the support group shared, reviewed, and discussed their lesson plans and ideas from the previous week.

At another school, the mentor and protégé were instrumental in the formation of a group of staff members who have written a school improvement grant proposal. The group is also working on arranging teacher action research projects and coordinating classroom visitations. As of this writing, the informal groups have applied for a state school improvement grant to support their activities.

At a third school, the several mentor-protégé teams have become the focal points for an informal, loosely organized group of teachers who want assistance and support to try new lessons and strategies.

In each of these three schools the mentor-protégé teams have been the focal points for the informal groups of teachers who are seeking to change and improve their classrooms and their schools. The informal groups are focused on school improvement activities. These informal groups at two of the schools are meeting on a regular basis to share and exchange information. Therefore, there has been some degree of school climate change. However, these changes have not been formalized, universally accepted by a majority of the teachers, or institutionalized. The activities of the mentor-protégé teams clearly have been noticed by other teachers and have had a direct impact on them. Whether these informal groups will become formal forces for school improvement remains to be seen.

These findings corroborate Smylie's (1989) findings from a national survey of 2,530 teachers. In that study, teachers ranked consultation with other teachers about their own classroom practices as their most effective sources of learning.

DISCUSSION

Selection Issues

Mentor teachers are similar to other change agents (Miles et al., 1988; Beaton, 1985; Strudler, 1987) in their reliance on sophisticated interpersonal skills to achieve their objectives. Consequently, in selecting mentor teachers, principals and program directors would be well advised to give equal attention to applicants' interpersonal skills, previous experiences with adults, and teaching ability.

One other selection issue involves the amount of time and emotional energy that mentors have available to spend with their protégés. Whether it was going to local football games, inviting them to their homes for dinner, or attending other social functions together, all the mentors reported spending extra time outside the school day building bonds of trust and friendship with their protégés. In fact, three of the five mentors took weekend trips to the Oregon coast with their protégés. Clearly, the time mentors spent with their protégés was not circumscribed by the school grounds or school hours.

The principals of the schools in the study demonstrated a great deal of insight about the teachers they selected to become mentors. We believe this has as much to say about the competence of those principals as it does about the teachers they selected. The promise of mentoring in public education rests upon the principals' ability to select as mentors those teachers who, in the opinion of their peers, are highly competent.

Another selection issue concerns the mentor's professional and personal relationship with the principal. A principal's selection of a teacher for a mentorship fits the anthropological definition of "patronage." Both the principal and the mentor are accountable members of a social community. Two prominent features of this community are its continuity and the reciprocity relations between members (Goodell, 1985).

From an anthropological viewpoint, then, mentors are obligated to deliver a capable performance of their responsibilities for their principals. In return for a job well

performed, principals are obligated to further recognize and reward mentors within their organizational means. Therefore, we believe that principals only will consider as mentors those teachers with whom they have safe and comfortable relations. Conversely, those mentors who are appointed will continue to please their principals through whatever means they have learned are effective.

Under such a system and without a specific mandate from their principals, those teachers who are selected to become mentors only will use reasonably well-accepted methods with their protégés. To do otherwise, mentors would risk conflict with other teachers and the principal, and would violate the occupational and organizational traditions in public education (Little, 1990).

This discussion highlights a critical skill for mentors. They must possess the socio-political skills to negotiate a path in a social organization that does not have any previous precedents or guidelines for their roles (Little, 1990).

Advantages of a Formal Mentor Program

Many teachers have reported that they had a mentor (Fagan & Walter, 1982). In most cases this was an informal situation. However, a formal program has many advantages over an informal arrangement. One of them is that protégés know that the mentor has a responsibility to answer their questions and help them with their problems. Therefore, a formal program increases the likelihood that the protégé's needs will be met.

Another advantage of a formal program is that it helps ensure that minor classroom problems will not occupy more of the protégé's time than they deserve. In a review of 83 studies about the difficulties perceived by beginning teachers, Veenman (1984) discovered that the three main problems of beginning teachers were classroom discipline, motivating students, and dealing with individual differences. Mentors can share valuable experiences and insights with their protégés about all three of these classroom problems. In the present

study, three of the five mentors helped their protégés resolve classroom management problems.

Still another advantage of a formal mentor program is that it may increase the likelihood that a greater percentage of teachers (both mentors and protégés) will remain in the profession for a longer time. In fact, teacher retention was one of the original purposes for some mentor programs (Little, 1990).

Many researchers feel that collegial working relationships of the type fostered by mentor or peer coaching programs are essential features of a new model of supervision (Rosenholtz, 1989; Nias, 1989; Fullan, 1990; Acheson, 1991). Proponents assert that if this supervision model were used, it would encourage teachers to improve their instructional practices in an atmosphere of trust and understanding. Proponents claim such a supervision plan would increase teachers' job satisfaction and ultimately foster teacher retention.

A Two-Year Mentorship Program

In order for groups to accomplish their goals, both socio-emotional and task- oriented functions must be performed. In the mentoring cases that we studied, the socio-emotional functions were dominant. Because a mentoring relationship is artificial, trust, rapport, and a supportive environment must be established before instructional issues can be addressed directly (Huling-Austin et al., 1989). A beginning teacher has strong emotional needs, too. The combined stress of relocating to a new area for the first time, often without friends or family, can be upsetting to anyone. In addition, beginning teachers must face additional stresses of their new positions: new people, new job, and new roles. All these stresses exact an emotional toll on the new teacher that probably is stronger than any classroom technical needs they may have.

Because of the immediacy of their protégé's emotional needs, mentors in the present study had very little time to devote to their protégé's technical needs. If the mentor

program were extended to a two-year program, mentors could attend to their protégé's technical needs in the second year of the program. If this possibility became a reality, mentors would be able to use those task-oriented skills that were neglected during their first year as mentors.

In fact, during our interviews, every protégé expressed a desire for the program to continue for a second year. Also, they believed their relationships with their mentors would continue to evolve on an informal basis in the succeeding years that followed the one-year program. Several mentors said that the continuation of their relationships with their protégés was a matter of personal pride and friendship. Therefore, they planned to continue their association with their protégés on an informal basis.

Preservice Teacher Preparation

All the mentors and several principals commented on the excellent technical preparation that their beginning teachers brought with them. We discovered, however, that the protégés' emotional needs often interfered with their ability to demonstrate technical proficiency. If these beginning teachers were given an extra year to consolidate and perfect their technical knowledge as intern teachers, they possibly would have the confidence to face their first teaching assignments without the strong socio-emotional needs they presently have. These future teachers also would have another year of maturity to bring to their new positions.

The emotional support needed by new teachers also has implications for the preservice placement of student teachers. It often has been the practice for schools to hire new teachers from among those students who were placed at the school for their practice teaching experience. If student teachers could be placed at schools where there were expected vacancies, and if they later were hired at those schools, it might help alleviate the emotional needs the beginning teachers in this study exhibited.

Mentors' Lack of Impact on their Protégés' Instruction

Three of the five mentors had training and experience with clinical conferencing, peer coaching, or team teaching, but they rarely had an opportunity to use those skills to improve their protégé's instructional repertoire. Four of the five mentors expressed a desire for further training and experience in the areas of peer coaching and clinical supervision. Whether the mentors would use this training to assist their protégé's instructional improvement is a matter of conjecture. The findings of this study suggest, though, that if the protégés requested this assistance, the mentors would respond accordingly. Two of the five protégés told us that they wanted their mentors to observe their classrooms and give them feedback about their teaching in the same way their principals did during their classroom visits.

Some mentoring programs have been developed to provide mentors and protégés with intensive classroom observation and peer coaching experience (Thies-Sprinthall, 1986; Howey & Zimpher, 1989). These programs require more training for both the mentors and protégés and more school release time than is presently required by the Oregon Mentoring Program.

As numerous other studies have found, the present study confirms that classroom survival is the most important priority for beginning teachers (Lortie, 1968; Fuller & Brown, 1975; Pataniczek & Isaacson, 1981; Huberman, 1989; Bullough, 1989; Nias, 1989). The findings of the present study suggest that the Oregon Mentoring Program is meeting the survival needs of the beginning teacher protégés it serves.

The program's few requirements were the subject of many positive comments from the study's informants. Several of them said that the few demands the program made on the district and the schools allowed them to tailor the program to meet their own needs. In fact, the programs at two of the schools would not be in operation if the Oregon Mentoring Program had made greater training or release time demands than is presently the case. The programs at both schools were initiated in early August just prior to the beginning of the

1989-90 school year. If there had been additional mentor training requirements, the mentors at these two schools would not have been able to meet them.

Recommendations for Further Study

Mentoring programs are a recent phenomenon. Further study is necessary if this innovation is to become more than just a passing fad. The present study suggests two questions in particular that need investigation: What are the differences in outcomes between mentors who use the skills and strategies that were found to be effective in this study and mentors who use those skills and strategies to a lesser extent or not at all? Would specific training in those skills and strategies that were found to be effective in this study make future mentors more effective?

In addition, longitudinal research is needed to learn about the long-range effects of the program on the participants. For example, we need to determine whether participation in the mentor program has an effect on teacher retention.

The results of the present study suggest that a two-year mentor program would be effective by placing greater emphasis on protégés' instructional strategies. Research on this type of two-year mentor program is needed. Also, comparative studies involving other methods of teacher induction and other staff development programs need to be undertaken to judge the overall value of mentor programs in public education.

Research about the effects of mentor programs and peer collaboration on student achievement is needed. Do the students of beginning teachers with mentors learn more than students of beginning teachers without mentors?

The first-year teachers in the present study experienced increased satisfaction with their jobs as a result of the opportunities that were provided to them by the mentoring program. It would be desirable to do research to determine whether experienced teachers as well would enjoy greater job satisfaction if they were provided with the same opportunities.

FOOTNOTE

1. A more extensive report of the study presented in this paper can be found in the first author's doctoral dissertation: Ackley, B. (1991). The role of mentor teachers in Oregon's beginning teacher support program. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.

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Table 1

Mentors' Strategies

Strategies	Interview Frequency	Questionnaire Frequency	Questionnaire Rank
Solution-giving	3	2	10
Resource-adding	4	4	6
Resource-linking	1	6	5
Coaching	5	6	9
Demonstration/model	6	6	4
Support/planning	6	7	8
Monitor/evaluate	4	4	7
Clinical conferences	5	1	12.5
Networking	2	1	11
Technical assistance	9	3	12.5
Energize/motivate	2	8	3
Controlling	1	0	
Collab. problem-solving	13	13	1
Develop support struct.	6	5	8
Emotional support	24	11	2
Training	0	1	

Table 2

Mentors' Skills

Skills	Interview Frequency	Questionnaire Frequency	Questionnaire Rank
General Skills			
Talking	37	12	5
Listening	37	13	2
Interpersonal ease	40	11	1
Group functioning	0	5	8.5
Reading	0	1	7
Training	8	3	
Master Teacher	32	8	3.5
Administrative/organizational	8	5	6
Knowledge of content	9	12	3.5
Grain of Salt (Humor)	0	8	8.5
Specific Skills			
Initiative-taking	13	4	6.5
Support	34	15	5
Conflict mediation	3	0	
Confidence-building	11	13	2
Managing/controlling	2	0	
Resource-bringing	4	11	3.5
Trust/rapport-building	30	11	3.5
Confrontation	0	0	
Collaboration	19	8	8
Diagnosing individual needs	16	6	6.5
Diagnosing school needs	0	3	9
Demonstration/modeling	5	12	1

Table 3

Mentors' Sources of Support

Sources of Support	Interview Frequency	Questionnaire Frequency	Questionnaire Rank
Previous experience w/ adults	6	8	3
Mentor training	4	9	5
District support	12	4	6
Administrative support	9	9	4
Local staff support	14	4	7
Team match	2	14	1
Empathy w/ protege	22	10	2

Table 4

Mentors' Sources of Satisfaction

Sources of Satisfaction	Interview Frequency	Questionnaire Frequency	Questionnaire Rank
Selection as a mentor	5	3	5
Increased status	1	0	
Pass on knowledge	4	3	7
Help someone	3	3	3.5
Increased pers. growth	0	4	3.5
Increased prof. growth	10	5	1
Job promotion/change	0	0	
Increased salary	3	3	6
Opporty.for personal rel.	3	5	2
Other	1	0	

Table 5

Mentors' Frustrations, Obstacles, and Impediments

Frustrations, Obstacles, and Impediments	Interview Frequency	Questionnaire Frequency	Questionnaire Rank
Lack of time	7	14	1
Lack of knowledge of adults	0	1	5
Lack of rapport w/ protégé	0	1	
Lack of support	0	0	
Lack of proximity	7	6	2
Lack of congruence	4	5	3
Lack of resources	0	2	4
Insufficient training	1	2	6.5
Insufficient salary	0	2	6.5
Other	2	1	

Table 6

Mentors' Accomplishments

Outcomes	Interview Frequency	Questionnaire Frequency	Questionnaire Rank
Too early to tell	0	0	
Short-run successes	0	4	5
Protégé uses procedures/skills	1	7	3
Satisfactory relationship	18	11	1
Satisfaction w/ program	15	14	2
Implementation	2	7	6
School climate change	6	2	7
Organizational change	2	3	8
Positive student impact	9	8	4
Capacity-building	8	3	7
Institutionalization	5	2	9